

Message Text

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17

ACTION H-03

INFO OCT-01 NEA-06 ISO-00 SS-07 AID-01 NSC-06 RSC-01 /025 W

----- 056400

R 211020Z NOV 74

FM AMEMBASSY CAIRO

TO SECSTATE WASHDC 0357

C O N F I D E N T I A L CAIRO 9390

E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: OREP (KENNEDY, EDWARD M.)

SUBJECT: CODEL KENNEDY VISIT TO CAIRO

1. SENATOR EDWARD M. KENNEDY SPENT WHIRLWIND 14 HOURS ON VISIT TO CAIRO NOV 18/19 DURING WHICH MET MET WITH PRESIDENT SADAT AND WAS GUEST OF HONOR AT DINNER GIVEN BY DEPUTY SPEAKER OF THE PEOPLE'S ASSEMBLY DR. GAMAL OTEIFY. HE WAS ACCOMPANIED BY HIS SISTER, MRS. SMITH, AND STAFF AIDE, ROBERT HUNTER. SENATOR KENNEDY'S VISIT, WHICH WAS BILLED AS AN UNOFFICIAL VISIT BUT FOR WHICH HE WAS THE GUEST OF THE FOREIGN MINISTER, DREW WIDE PRESS COVERAGE. PRESS PURSUED AND QUESTIONED SENATOR DURING HIS MOVEMENTS, INCLUDING HEAVY COVERAGE OF VISIT TO CAIRO'S ORIENTAL BAZAAR.

2. MEETING WITH PRESIDENT SADAT LASTED TWO HOURS. SENATOR KENNEDY LATER EXPRESSED HIS ADMIRATION FOR PRESIDENT SADAT, WHOM HE DESCRIBED AS OUTSTANDING STATESMAN WHO SEEKS PEACE AND, PARTICULARLY, HIS BELIEF IN PRESIDENT SADAT'S SINCERITY IN SEEKING TO SOLVE M.E. PROBLEM. UNFORTUNATELY, MEETING SCHEDULED WITH OTEIFY AND SEVERAL MEMBERS OF PEOPLES ASSEMBLY FELL THROUGH BECAUSE OF CONFLICT WITH PRESIDENTIAL APPOINTMENT. HOWEVER, THERE WAS OPPORTUNITY MEET WITH MEMBERS OF PEOPLES ASSEMBLY AND VARIOUS OF CAIRO'S LEADING JOURNALISTS DURING DINNER GIVEN BY OTEIFY IN SENATOR'S HONOR. EXCHANGE OF VIEWS BETWEEN THE SENATOR AND HIS EGYPTIAN HOSTS WAS LIVELY. SENATOR WAS ABLE TO CONVEY HIS VIEWS ON M.E. SITUATION TO A SELECTIVE AUDIENCE OF POLITICALLY SOPHISTICATED EGYPTIANS; HE IN TURN HAD OPPORTUNITY TO HEAR THEIR VIEWS. PREDICTABLY, WHILE BOTH SIDES AGREED ON NEED FOR PEACE AND

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ON SADAT'S DESIRE FOR PEACE, RESPECTIVE VIEWS DIFFERED ON HOW

TO ACHIEV IT. NEVERTHELESS, WE BELIEVE THE EXCHANGE WAS USEFUL TO BOTH SIDES. DUE TO SHORT DURATION OF VISIT AND FULL SCHEDULE, THE SENATOR COULD ONLY SKETCHILY DEBRIEF AMBASSADOR ON HIS MEETING WITH STATE. CODEL DID SUGGEST THAT PRESIDENT SADAT SCHEDULE VISIT TO US DURING TIME WHEN CONGRESS IS IN SESSION SO THAT HE COULD MEET WITH BOTH HOUSE AND SENATE FOREIGN AFFAIRS/RELATIONS COMMITTEES.

6. CAIRO PRESS NOV 19 GAVE SENATOR'S TWO HOUR MEETING WITH SADAT FRONT PAGE PLAY WITH THREE COLUMN PICTURES. KENNEDY WAS QUOTED AS PRAISING SADAT FOR HIS STATESMANSHIP AND EFFORTS TO BRING ABOUT ME PEACE, AND AS EXPRESSING HOPE CONGRESSMEN WOULD MEET WITH SADAT DURING LATTER'S VISIT TO WASHINGTON. ACCORDING TO PRESS STORIES, SENATOR SAID HIS STATEMENTS IN ISRAEL HAD BEEN REPORTED IN AN ABBREVIATED WAY; DESCRIBED ARAFAT'S UN SPEECH AS A "STEP BACKWARD"; AND INDICATED US ROLE IN SOLVING ME PROBLEM IS "NOT A MAJOR ONE." ASKED ABOUT US ARMS FOR ISRAEL, SENATOR REPORTEDLY REPLIED THAT ARABS, TOO, RECEIVE ARMS FROM USSR.

7. DISCUSSIONS AT OTEIFY DINNER WERE AIRED ON NOV 20 IN ARTICLES CARRYING BY-LINE OF AHRAH'S CHIEF DIPLOMATIC CORRESPONDENT HAMDI FU'AD AND MANAGING EDITOR ALI HAMDI AL-GAMAL WHO HAD BEEN PRESENT. ARTICLES WERE CRITICAL OF SENATOR'S POSITIONS ON ARAB-ISRAELI QUESTION, PARTICULARLY WITH RESPECT TO HIS ARGUMENTS IN DEFENSE OF ISRAEL AND ON PALESTINIAN RIGHTS. AL-GAMAL'S COLUMN CONCLUDED WITH COMMENT ON LACK OF KNOWLEDGE OF SITUATION ON PART OF US CONGRESSMEN AND NEED FOR EGYPTIANS TO CONTACT THEM AND EXPLAIN ARAB POSITION WITHOUT ASSUMING THEIR VIEWS ARE HOPELESSLY FIXED. IN THIS CONTEXT, AL-GAMAL FELT SENATOR KENNEDY LEFT MEETING WITH SADAT "DEEPLY CONVINCED EGYPT WANTS PEACE AND THIS IS WHAT HE WILL CONVEY TO AMERICAN PEOPLE."
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Message Attributes

Automatic Decaptioning: X
Capture Date: 01 JAN 1994
Channel Indicators: n/a
Current Classification: UNCLASSIFIED
Concepts: n/a
Control Number: n/a
Copy: SINGLE
Draft Date: 21 NOV 1974
Decaption Date: 01 JAN 1960
Decaption Note:
Disposition Action: RELEASED
Disposition Approved on Date:
Disposition Authority: CollinP0
Disposition Case Number: n/a
Disposition Comment: 25 YEAR REVIEW
Disposition Date: 28 MAY 2004
Disposition Event:
Disposition History: n/a
Disposition Reason:
Disposition Remarks:
Document Number: 1974CAIRO09390
Document Source: CORE
Document Unique ID: 00
Drafter: n/a
Enclosure: n/a
Executive Order: GS
Errors: N/A
Film Number: D740337-0309
From: CAIRO
Handling Restrictions: n/a
Image Path:
ISecure: 1
Legacy Key: link1974/newtext/t19741125/aaaaauud.tel
Line Count: 95
Locator: TEXT ON-LINE, ON MICROFILM
Office: ACTION H
Original Classification: CONFIDENTIAL
Original Handling Restrictions: n/a
Original Previous Classification: n/a
Original Previous Handling Restrictions: n/a
Page Count: 2
Previous Channel Indicators: n/a
Previous Classification: CONFIDENTIAL
Previous Handling Restrictions: n/a
Reference: n/a
Review Action: RELEASED, APPROVED
Review Authority: CollinP0
Review Comment: n/a
Review Content Flags:
Review Date: 14 AUG 2002
Review Event:
Review Exemptions: n/a
Review History: RELEASED <14-Aug-2002 by martinml>; APPROVED <14 MAR 2003 by CollinP0>
Review Markings:

Declassified/Released
US Department of State
EO Systematic Review
30 JUN 2005

Review Media Identifier:
Review Referrals: n/a
Review Release Date: n/a
Review Release Event: n/a
Review Transfer Date:
Review Withdrawn Fields: n/a
Secure: OPEN
Status: NATIVE
Subject: CODEL KENNEDY VISIT TO CAIRO
TAGS: OREP, (KENNEDY, EDWARD M)
To: STATE
Type: TE
Markings: Declassified/Released US Department of State EO Systematic Review 30 JUN 2005